Discussion Paper

Ministry of Education

01/79: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DISCUSSION PAPER 01/79

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Dr. Ron Faris, Chairman

The Division of Continuing Education is interested in your comments on the matters raised in this previously unpublished report. On the back page you will find a convenient mail-in form, or you may respond in more detail to the address given.

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PREFACE

This study follows the Report of the Committee on Continuing and Community Education which identified adult basic education as an area of highest educational priority. This Report, which attempts to assess the need for, as well as the existing public education services in, adult basic education, is based on data gathered by experienced adult basic education personnel seconded with the co-operation of their institutions. Mrs. Anna Paul from the Pacific Vocational Institute, Ms. Marg Cleaveley from Northern Lights College, Ron Fussell from Vancouver Community College and David Harrison from Malaspina College performed yeoman services as investigators during the May-June period of 1977 to survey school board and college adult basic education operations. Thanks to the co-operation of administrators and instructors throughout the province, this difficult and complex task was accomplished within the established deadline.

Given the limitations of the study, it could only be a snapshot of the ever-changing adult basic education scene in British Columbia. It is therefore an approximation of the situation in the field as of July, 1977.

The Committee was assisted by Ms. Tiiu Kava, Research Officer of the Ministry of Education, and Ms. Susanne Hansell, summer Research Assistant, who gathered and sifted much of the data. Special thanks are extended to Dr. Gary Dickinson, former Principal of East Kootenay Community College and a present member of the Adult Education Department at the University of British Columbia for much of the analysis and editorial work in the main text.

Ron Faris, Ph.D.
Chairman
September 22, 1977
Victoria, British Columbia

INTRODUCTION

Education in our affluent, technological society is regarded as a key to attaining economic and personal competence and self-fulfillment, yet those who are best educated tend to take advantage of opportunities to continue their education while the least educated tend not to engage in activities to improve their knowledge and skills. The difficulties encountered by this latter group in furthering their basic education are not simply a lack of motivation or will. The reality of the situation is that for those who have the lowest levels of education, few appropriate opportunities for continuing have been made available by the public educational institutions of British Columbia. While some educational institutions have attempted to develop viable adult basic education programs, the situation generally has been that adult basic education is an area of neglect and low priority at all levels.

Although adult basic education has been defined in different ways by different authorities, there is a reasonable degree of agreement regarding the subject-matter areas to be included. Adult basic education encompasses those basic functional skills of reading, writing, spelling and computation which are required by all adults to function adequately in a modern technological society. Current approaches also emphasize certain additional skills and abilities which adults require to function adequately in their everyday roles as citizens, parents, and workers.

A central question that must be considered in defining adult basic

education is that of how much education is required for an adult to function adequately in society. The answer partly lies in an examination of the role of basic education in relation to such social problems as widespread unemployment, chronic welfare dependence, and anti-social behaviour resulting in incarceration. The amount of basic education required for adequate functioning varies from person to person and generation to generation.

The following case studies indicate the range of individual motivations and life situations that lead to a need for adult basic education.

1. Mary-Ann, now in her mid 30's, left school during the eighth grade. Since the break-up of her marriage, she has been on welfare with two children to support. She needs upgrading in basic skills before she can enrol in a course in clerical and office skills. Her goal is to achieve economic independence for herself and her children.

2. Craig dropped out of school at the age of 16 and by 19 was in jail. At age 20, when he had obtained his parole, he enrolled in an adult basic education class. During the next four months, Craig completed two academic subjects in a Grade 10 program, and successfully wrote his G.E.D. examination. Craig is now fully employed as an electrician's helper. As a single parent he makes a home for his two-year-old daughter, whose custody he has recently regained.

3. Pete is in his 50's and is the foreman of a pre-fabricating plant. He grew up in a rural area where he attended school for a few years but left as he was needed to work on the farm and later to help support his large family. Pete is an intelligent man who has built several homes over the years for his family. He has done all the electrical work and the plumbing, including the installation of a hot water heating system. He said he had learned to do all these things by watching others. He has come to school at 55 because he always wanted to learn to read and write. He was so pleased when he was able to read the newspaper well enough to make some sense out of the articles. Pete has a family of three teenagers who are very proud and supportive of him.

Some fifteen years ago, those who had less than five years of schooling were considered to be "functionally illiterate" by the Census of Canada.

Since that time, however, the complexity of society has increased to the extent that a higher level of basic education has become a social requisite. Because of this, the Canadian Association for Adult Education in recent years adopted the UNESCO definition of a "functionally illiterate" adult as one who has completed less than nine years of schooling. The definition of "functional literacy" changes with technological-societal change. For example, someone who may have thrived in a previous generation despite a grade school education would find himself today unable to even qualify for entrance into most trades training unless he completed at least grade ten.

This report is concerned with basic education for adults up to and beyond literacy levels. It accepts the British Columbia Ministry of Education definition of "basic education" for youth, which includes schooling up to Grade 12, as the definition of "basic education" for adults. There are, however, a variety of terms and acronyms that are used to describe various programs of adult basic education:

Basic Training for Skills Development (B.T.S.D.) is offered in four levels up to Grade 12 equivalency and provides basic education with a vocational orientation.

College Preparation and College Foundations programs provide up to Grade 12 equivalency for adults who are academically oriented.

Adult Secondary programs are offered by school district to enable adult student to complete Grade 12.

Basic Job Readiness Training (B.J.R.T.), Basic Employment Skills Training (B.E.S.T.), and Employment Orientation for Women (E.O.W.) are short-term, full-time programs designed to facilitate adult entry or re-entry into the labour force.

4.

General Educational Development (G.E.D.) programs are designed to prepare adults to write the G.E.D. test which can provide Grade 12 equivalency.

THE NEED

The educational status of the adult population in British Columbia, is indicated in the 1971 Census of Canada. The data reveals that of all persons 15 years and over, out of school and with no further training, some 108,365 persons or 7.5 per cent of the total, had completed less tnan Grade 5, and a further 315,775 (21.8 per cent) had five to eight years of schooling. Only 228,950 (15.8 per cent) have more than Grade 12. Several factors should be taken into account in interpreting this data. First, a significant number of older people who have not gone beyond Grade 8 are included. Second, despite a lack of formal education, a considerable number of older folk, as well as other exceptional persons, have functioned adequately in such adult roles as parents, employees and citizens. For many less fortunate, however, the need for basic education is clear. The incidence of low educational attainment varies with such factors as age, sex, place of residence, birthplace and ethnic group.

More men than women have a low level of education. Twenty-seven per cent of adult women have less than nine years of schooling, compared with 31.7 per cent of adult men. In the 15-24 age group, 9.9 per cent have less than Grade 9, compared with 18.1 per cent in the 25-44 age group and 38.5 per cent among those who are 45 and older.

Levels of schooling tend to be higher in urban than in rural areas. Some 35.7 per cent of all rural adults compared to 27.4 per cent of all urban adults had less than Grade 9 education. Of the 20-59 age group, 21.3 per cent of rural men and 16.6 per cent of

rural women or 19 per cent of rural adults had less than Grade 9 education compared to 13.3 per cent of urban men and 11.2 per cent of urban women or 12.4 per cent of urban adults.

In centres with over 10,000 people, higher concentrations of persons with less than Grade 9 education were in Matsqui (42.1 per cent), Mission (39.4 per cent), Chilliwack (37.4 per cent), and Vernon (37.1 per cent). Higher concentrations of those with eight or fewer years of schooling are also found in some Census Divisions such as Bulkley-Nechako (40.5 per cent), Ocean Falls (38.9 per cent), Cariboo (38.7 per cent), and Central Kootenay (38.0 per cent).

Persons born in Canada had the lowest rate of less than Grade 9 (21.9 per cent), followed by those born in the United Kingdom (25.4 per cent), United States (29.9 per cent), other European countries (47.4 per cent), and other countries (35.5 per cent). By ethnic group, lower levels of education ranged from 15.4 per cent of Jewish and 19.5 per cent of British Isles backgrounds to 50.9 per cent among Italian and 63.1 per cent among Indian and Eskimo ethnic groups.

Aside from the cold statistics of educational attainment, the existence of nearly half a million adults in British Columbia who have not gone beyond Grade 8 raises some fundamental questions about the nature of functional literacy in our province and the effectiveness of our educational system in dealing with it. Studies have indicated the need to strengthen the basic education not only of youth, but also of parents, whose previous educational attainment and attitudes toward education appear to be key determinants of youngsters'

achievement. Differential achievement rates have been identified by geographic regions and socio-economic groups in these investigations. The probability of academic achievement among young people in non-metropolitan areas is low, especially among low income families with little previous schooling. Thus, the vicious cycle of educational disadvantage appears to be a pervasive social phenomenon with deep-rooted barriers to improvement.

In a literate society such as ours where the majority can read, write, and compute at a functional level, the minority of people who are functionally illiterate often bear a sense of failure, shame, and frustration, and they tend to develop techniques of avoidance and coping which allow them to be an invisible, silent group. Earlier negative school experiences of many have discouraged them from returning to learning. A major problem of stimulating and sustaining motivation to return to education therefore exists.

Some present educational practices tend to inhibit the efforts of adults to return to learning. One factor is the maintenance of inequitable tuition policies. Those who for personal, family or other reasons drop out of school are presented with a variety of hurdles if they endeavour to re-enter the educational system. Few opportunities exist for basic literacy education in our province, and those that do, aside from a few income-supported Manpower training programs, invariably are fee-bearing. In contrast, the majority of people who passed through the school system as youths paid no tuition fees.

Several ministries within the provincial government, notably Labour and Human Resources, have collected data and expressed concern about the economic and social consequences of low educational levels in the adult population. However, there appears to be no clear definition of the roles of those ministries and no distinct lines of communication between them or with Education. This situation could be viewed as an obstacle to the development of co-operative and effective strategies for alleviating the identified problems.

The social and economic costs of low educational attainment are high. Most adult functional illiterates are among the working poor, and many are unemployed. Many persons with low educational attainment are now finding that they lack the basic skills required for continued employment as examinations for tickets are becoming more prevalent. Although individual cases of economic success without a high level of education can be cited, the general trend is for labour force participation to increase and unemployment to decrease with higher educational attainment. For example, labour force participation is 42.6 per cent for those with less than nine years of schooling, and unemployment is 12.7 per cent. In contrast, labour force participation reaches 79.7 per cent among those with university degrees and unemployment is only 3.3 per cent (Table 1).

TABLE I

Unemployment and Labour Force Participation
in British Columbia
Rates by Level of Education, April 1977

Level of Education	No. in Population	% Labour Force Participation	% Unemployed
0-8 years of schooling	312,000	42.6	12.7
Some high school	1,008,000	60.8	11.5
Some post-secondary	224,000	66.8	6.9
Post-secondary certificate or diploma	180,000	71.8	5.8
University degree	149,000	79.9	3.3
TOTAL	1,873,000	61.1	9.5

Note: Data provided by Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, April, 1977*

Similarly, relatively high proportions of those on welfare are functionally illiterate. For example, a recent study in a Vancouver district indicated that over 52% of those on social assistance had Grade 9 or less. The study concluded:

> The statistics indicate that lack of education is probably a major barrier to employment opportunities for over 50% of the social assistance clients in East Vancouver. This lack of education not only reduces employment opportunities in our modern society, but is also a direct barrier to obtaining skills training where a minimum of Grade 10 and often Grade 12 education level is an entry requirement. One can safely conclude that educational tutoring and upgrading courses will be a major program necessity in East Vancouver.

Great numbers of prison inmates have need for Adult Basic Education also. Both Federal and Provincial prison authorities agree

* Labour Force data is obtained by sampling techniques. They estimate on the total population 15 years and older and not just those out of school.

on the need for more adult basic education programs despite the fact that one-third of prison inmates are already involved in some form of education upgrading. Indeed, a shortage of places in upgrading and vocational courses in the Lower Mainland has been cited as a major problem by a Corrections Branch official.

The need for basic education among the adult population of British Columbia is readily apparent from an examination of Census data and an analysis of the relationship between education and social problems. As the subsequent section will show, however, current efforts in the field fall far short of the need.

CURRENT PROVISIONS

The Ministry of Education currently plays a minimal role in the provision of adult basic education services. It has little capacity to provide leadership or coordination and there is no stated policy regarding the field.

In lieu of the province taking an active role, the federal Department of Manpower, which is ostensibly a funding agency only, has influenced educational practice throughout the province. Manpower course descriptions, funding patterns, and short-term contractual arrangements have directly affected the quantity and quality of Adult Basic Education to a far greater extent than necessary if the Ministry of Education carried out its full mandate under the British North America Act.

With a lack of involvement by the province and a hesitant involvement by Canada Manpower, Adult Basic Education in British Columbia has tended to be *ad hoc* and spasmodic. Some individuals and institutions have responded to needs that they have identified in their communities and provided a service. Such efforts, however, have varied considerably from institution to institution and from year to year.

Precise data regarding the extent of Adult Basic Education provisions in British Columbia are difficult to acquire for a variety of reasons. Responsibility for programming is often diffused throughout an institution so that records are rarely available in one place. Both students and institutions tend to be transient, which complicates the record-keeping process. Similar programs are offered under different titles, and use of the

traditional classroom method is by no means universal, so data on student enrolments are not always consistent.

From the limited data available, it appears that Adult Basic Education currently involves a minimum of 500 courses and 6,000 students per year throughout the province. Ministry of Education data show 5,856 enrolments in Manpower-related programs in 1975-76 and 6,140 in 1976-77, with completion rates of 59.5 and 57.6 per cent (Table II).

TABLE II

Enrolments and Completions in Selected Adult Basic Education Programs, 1975-76 and 1976-77

Program	1975-76			1976-77		
	Enrolment	Completions	% Completions	Enrolment	Completions	% Completions
BTSD	4372	2373	59.1	4632	2380	51.4
BJRT & BEST	459	366	79.7	421	331	78.6
EOW	269	240	77.6	318	289	90.9
ELT	756	507	67.1	769	538	70.0
TOTAL	5856	3486	59.5	6140	3538	57.6

Note: Data obtained from Ministry of Education summary of TV27 forms submitted by institutions. Both Manpower-sponsored and fee-paying students are included.

Members of the Committee surveyed each institutional provider of Adult Basic Education to determine the number of courses and students in 1976-77. Although the data were incomplete, a total of 529 classes were reported, with 117 for full-time students, 185 for part-time students, and 227 available to both full-time and part-time participants (Table III). The fewest

number of classes were in the South-Southeastern region (33) and the largest number in the Lower Mainland (344).

TABLE III

Number of Adult Basic Education Classes by Region, 1976-77

Region	Classes			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time or Part-time	Total
North-Central	28	26	--	54
South-Southeastern	14	5	14	33
Lower Mainland & Fraser Valley	55	126	163	344
Vancouver Island	20	28	50	98
TOTAL	117	185	227	529

Note: Data were obtained from surveys conducted by Committee members. Vancouver Island figures were computed from average class sizes. Some programs did not use the class method, hence the number of classes is an underestimate of total services provided.

A total of 6,588 students were reported, although a number of respondents could not provide enrolment figures (Table IV). The total included 1,987 full-time and 2,793 part-time students, with the remainder being indistinguishable as either full-time or part-time. Students ranged in age from the teens to the seventies with the average tending to fall in the twenties. No single ethnic group predominated throughout the province, but native Indians were mentioned most frequently as predominating in specific programs.

TABLE IV

Number of Adult Basic Education Students by Region, 1976-77

Region	Students			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time or Part-time	Total
North-Central	479	431	--	910
South-Southeastern	247	131	280	658
Lower Mainland & Fraser Valley	922	1,818	1,123	3,863
Vancouver Island	339	413	405	1,157
TOTAL	1,987	2,793	1,808	6,588

Note: Data were obtained from surveys conducted by Committee members. Some institutions could not report enrolments, hence the number of students is an underestimate of the services provided.

Teaching in Adult Basic Education must rank among the most difficult and demanding of any instructional role. With the exception of some who work in larger institutions, most instructors are hired on short-term contracts. They have literally no time for curriculum development or preparation. There are few clear provincial guidelines or educational objectives established and there is a lack of Canadian material. In non-metropolitan areas, Adult Basic Education instructors lead itinerant lives, and generally teach in situations which can be characterized as low-status, insecure, and marginal.

Surveys conducted by Committee members indicated that there are more than 500 Adult Basic Education teachers in the province. Approximately 170 of those were full-time instructors while the remainder were part-time

(Table V). Some 83 per cent had at least one university degree and about half had a teaching certificate.

TABLE V

Number of Adult Basic Education Instructors by Region, 1976-77

Region	Instructors		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total
North-Central	38	56	94
South-Southeastern	10	26	36
Lower Mainland & Fraser Valley	102	215	317
Vancouver Island	21	80	101
TOTAL	171	377	548

Note: Data obtained from surveys conducted by Committee members. Vancouver Island figures include North Island College.

It is difficult to convey the nature of Adult Basic Education classes using only statistics about students and instructors. There follows, therefore, a description of a specific class in Vancouver in 1977. Although it cannot be represented as "typical" of all such classes in British Columbia, it does give an indication of the range of problems and circumstances that an instructor and his students must deal with.

The class consists of 13 males and 3 females. The average age is 30, with a range from 18 to 54 years. Their prior educational attainment was from Grades 3 to 5, and they attend classes five hours per day, five days per week. The class includes middle-class self-supporting students, as

well as some on social assistance and a few receiving support from Canada Manpower.

At least four men are battling alcoholism but have never attended class inebriated. One young woman is a native Indian expecting a child. Four members of the class are learning English as a second language although they have a good command of spoken English. Their educational level in their mother tongue ranges from zero to high school completion. Two members of the class are bilingual French Canadians. One person was referred to the program because of a learning disability, and has already exceeded initial expectations. Five students have spent time in correctional institutions. Six have job skills that cannot be used because of physical disabilities or an inability to write examinations required for employment qualifications.

These class members with such diverse backgrounds have a common goal - to learn to read and write at least at the Grade 10 level if they hope to become securely and gainfully employed. The classroom atmosphere is informal, with everyone on a first-name basis. Attitudes toward learning are serious, and the instructor has the undivided attention of everyone when he speaks. Learning tasks tend to emphasize practical applications of the material, and the students participate by identifying their needs. Despite the long haul ahead, there is an atmosphere of optimism and success which is bolstered by the camaraderie of peers working towards a common goal.

CLOSING THE GAP

Recent statements by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have established the eradication of illiteracy as a goal for member countries. Although British Columbia has fared somewhat better than many other Canadian provinces in the attainment of that goal, it is still far from being reached. The existence of some 108,000 adults with less than five years of schooling and a further 316,000 with five to eight years, should be a cause for considerable concern on the part of the provincial government. When it is realized that almost 220,000 of these people are between the ages of 20 and 59 and in their potentially productive years, then the human and economic cost must be considered.

It became apparent to the Committee during the course of its investigations and deliberations that the main prerequisite for closing the gap between the need for and the provision of Adult Basic Education was an integrated and systematic approach. Adult Basic Education as it presently exists in British Columbia is characterized by an *ad hoc* approach which has resulted in uncertainty, insecurity, and inefficiency in the deployment and use of resources. Throughout the province, persons working in the field called for leadership, coordination, and assistance in a variety of matters such as curriculum development, staff training, delivery systems, support services and communication. The principal recommendation of the Committee, therefore, is:

1. That Adult Basic Education be regarded as an integrated system which can aid in the amelioration of provincial problems in such areas as unemployment and social welfare.

An integrated and systematic approach to Adult Basic Education should be developed around a set of goals which can serve as touchstones for its guidance and direction. In working towards such a set of goals, the Committee considered the priority needs identified in each region, as well as a number of broader provincial concerns, and recommends the following as goals for a provincial system of Adult Basic Education.

2. That the definition and scope of Adult Basic Education be kept under review by the Ministry of Education so that changes in society are reflected in changed directions and emphasis for Adult Basic Education.

3. That the role of the Ministry of Education and other ministries with respect to Adult Basic Education be defined and reviewed periodically.

4. That the role of the institutional providers of Adult Basic Education be defined in relation to the Ministry of Education, in relation to each other, and in relation to other program activities of the institution.

5. That funding philosophies and processes be developed which will facilitate the planning and implementation of a wider range of programs and other learning activities in Adult Basic Education.

6. That Adult Basic Education curriculum development, revision, and dissemination be conducted in a systematic way that is responsive to the needs of students and instructors.

7. That instructional and support staff in Adult Basic Education be provided with training that will enable them to conduct their tasks effectively and efficiently.

As recent studies by the Ministry of Education have indicated that there is a close relationship between the educational attainment of parents and their children, the Committee recommends as an additional goal:

8. That Adult Basic Education be strengthened as a means of raising the school achievement of youth.

Each of these goals may be supported by needs and recommendations that have been identified by persons working in the field. In some cases, a number of respondents identified the same need. For example, at least eight institutions identified a need for more classroom and laboratory space for Adult Basic Education while fourteen indicated that additional counselling services were required. The following sections take each of the above goals in turn, first by describing current problems and needs, and then by making a series of recommendations designed to lead to the attainment of the goals.

Scope

Adult Basic Education is considered to include Grades 1 to 12 equivalency for adults, and there are a variety of programs designed to meet needs throughout that range. However, the area of basic literacy, or Grades 1 through 8, has the fewest provisions in current practice. The Committee therefore recommends:

9. That within the spectrum of Adult Basic Education, Grades 1 to 8 equivalency be the area of greatest priority for at least the next five years.

Throughout the present range of Adult Basic Education, the fundamental skills of communication, mathematics, and science are emphasized. It has become increasingly clear, however, that these academic skills alone are not sufficient to enable an individual to gain and maintain employment or to attain personal fulfillment.

The Committee recommends:

10. That functional skills related to employment and everyday living should form an integral part of any Adult Basic Education program.

Several groups in society have, in the view of the Committee, remained in a position of educational disadvantage for a long period of time, and it is therefore recommended:

11. That a high priority be placed on expanding Adult Basic Education programs to serve a greater number of persons from ethnic minorities.

Handicapped adults who are capable of learning are often unable to participate in Adult Basic Education. For such adults, the costs to the province in terms of social assistance probably exceed the expenses involved in providing educational support services such as classroom and technical aids, income support during training, and the architectural changes required to make Adult Basic Education classrooms accessible to the physically handicapped. Those adults with more severe handicaps could become more independent through educational opportunities offered in community residential facilities, hospitals, achievement centres, and sheltered workshops. The Committee recommends:

12. That Adult Basic Education services be expanded for those with special handicaps and problems such as physical or emotional handicaps or learning disabilities.

Ministry

The impetus for Adult Basic Education in British Columbia has tended to come from a few dedicated individuals and institutions

who have identified a social and economic need and sought to fill it. A lack of provincial leadership or even concern was noted by many persons working in the field. The Committee was of the opinion that the development of a strengthened system of Adult Basic Education must originate at the provincial level. This requires a commitment by the provincial government both in terms of policy and funding.

Leadership for improved provisions of Adult Basic Education must obviously flow from the Ministry of Education. In reviewing the structure and functions of the Ministry, the Committee recommends:

13. That the Ministry of Education assume a role of leadership and coordination in Adult Basic Education with respect to such matters as communication, materials development and distribution, data collection, in-service training, program evaluation, and funding procedures.

and further recommends:

14. That the Ministry of Education stimulate pre-service training and applied research in Adult Basic Education that would be carried out by such institutions as universities and the Educational Research Institute of British Columbia.

In order to carry out those functions, and in keeping with the magnitude of the Adult Basic Education enterprise in British Columbia, the Committee recommends:

15. That a Provincial Coordinator of Adult Basic Education be included in the staff complement of the Post-Secondary Education Department.

and further recommends:

16. That the Co-ordinator should devote considerable time working with officials of other provincial ministries in clarifying roles, communicating, developing cooperative strategies, and promoting overall coordination.

The plethora of program types and certifications that exists in Adult Basic Education was viewed with concern by many instructors and administrators in the field. The utility and acceptability of such diverse programs as College Preparation, Basic Training for Skill Development (BTSD), the Adult Interrupted program, and the General Educational Development Test were by no means clearly understood by the respondents, and must be confusing indeed to potential participants. The Committee was aware that these and similar issues are being examined by the Secondary/Post-Secondary Articulation Committee, but nevertheless felt that clarification was required. The Committee therefore recommends:

17. That the various programs leading to secondary school completion or its equivalent be clearly defined, articulated, and publicized by the Ministry of Education, and that the responsibility for offering each program be clearly defined by institution.

Institutions

It was apparent in many institutions that Adult Basic Education lacks a secure place in the organizational structure. Various Adult Basic Education programs are under different directors in the same institution, or scattered in different locations throughout an area served by an institution. As a result of this diffused activity and responsibility, Adult Basic Education is often regarded as a lower status activity within the institution. Budgetary responsibility

is often difficult to pinpoint, classroom space tends to be deficient, and forward planning is difficult or in many cases impossible, given prevailing conditions. In order to respond to such institutional difficulties in providing Adult Basic Education, the Committee recommends:

18. That Adult Basic Education be responsible to a single council under the Colleges and Provincial Institutes Act.

19. That all of the Adult Basic Education programs within an institution be under the management of a single Dean or Director.

20. That the person directly responsible for Adult Basic Education within an institution be freed from classroom duties sufficiently to carry out the required administrative duties.

21. That institutions clarify and publicize the goals and objectives of each Adult Basic Education program within their jurisdiction so that student recruitment, placement and credit transfer as well as curriculum matters may be rationalized.

22. That communication and coordination be encouraged among all staff members engaged in Adult Basic Education programs within an institution and in neighbouring institutions.

23. That institutions conduct research and development projects within their communities to determine needed programs and to identify special client groups, and to evaluate program effectiveness in terms of subsequent student success.

24. That institutions attempt to plan their Adult Basic Education program offerings on a minimum two-year schedule.

25. That institutions seek to provide adequate classroom and laboratory space to accommodate their Adult Basic Education program offerings on an equivalent status to other programs.

Funding

It would not be unexpected in a report of this type to suggest that problems would be remedied by the infusion of funds on a scale

larger than heretofore provided. The gap between educational need and educational provisions is indeed wide in Adult Basic Education, but the Committee perceives a prerequisite for funding mechanisms and priorities to be clearly established before seeking augmented funding on any large scale. A multiplicity of government ministries and agencies at both the federal and provincial levels have an involvment in Adult Basic Education. Presently over six million dollars are expended annually on Adult Basic Education. Over five million dollars of this sum is expended on full-time students, many of whom receive income support. The balance is expended by colleges and school boards on programs chiefly for part-time students.

There are jurisdictional matters to be sorted out at a political level, and of particular concern is the relationship between the Ministry of Education and Canada Manpower. Nevertheless, there is a need for the development of a provincial policy regarding the access of adults to basic education, and any policy adopted would have a significant impact on funding levels and procedures. It would seem to be socially appropriate and economically viable to adopt a policy that would enable all of the province's residents to complete their basic education at any stage in their lives. The Committee therefore recommends:

26. That free tuition up to and including the Grade 12 equivalency level be made available to every resident of British Columbia.

Some of the confusion surrounding the funding and administration of Adult Basic Education could be reduced if college budgeting

procedures were altered. For example, various Adult Basic Education programs are now included under technical, academic, vocational, or non-credit budget categories. The Committee recommends:

27. That Adult Basic Education be treated as a discrete budget category in the annual operating budgets of colleges.

The Committee also recommends:

28. That college budgets include an ongoing budget for Adult Basic Education, which could be supplemented by "R.A.C." (Request for Additional Course) funds were appropriate and by other project funds where the R.A.C. system is inappropriate.

Curriculum

One of the major problems mentioned in every region of the province was the lack of a standard curriculum for use in Adult Basic Education. Dissatisfaction for the Vocational Adult Secondary Training (VAST) materials was expressed frequently. Instructors often had difficulty in acquiring suitable materials developed elsewhere, but had little time to develop indigenous materials. There were frequent requests for curriculum centres either on a provincial or regional basis, together with improved accessibility to available or newly-developed materials. The Committee recommends:

29. That a standard Adult Basic Education curriculum guide be developed for the province, with provision for local adaptations or additions.

and

30. That the Grades 1 to 8 equivalency level be assigned the highest priority for curriculum development.

To meet the need for a curriculum guide and supportive learning materials thoughout the province, the Committee recommends:

31. That a central curriculum development and resource service be established for Adult Basic Education.

32. That such a service include consultation with instructors and administrators in the field to identify, acquire, review, catalogue, produce, and disseminate Adult Basic Education curriculum materials.

33. That a small number of colleges be designated as regional centers for the housing and distribution of curriculum materials.

The Committee is aware of the activities of the Distance Education Planning Group and would suggest a close liaison between Adult Basic Education and that group, in relation to materials acquisition, production, cataloguing, and distribution. Similarly, curriculum development for Adult Basic Education might be accommodated within the new Program Development Division of the Post-Secondary Education Department.

The provision of suitable curriculum guides and materials as well as delivery systems is a critical factor in Adult Basic Education where the participants may have a series of previous failures in school settings. Deficiencies in the VAST materials and other resources now in use appeared to center on such factors as a monotonous approach, lack of imagination, and over-reliance on printed materials. In generalizing from many specific suggestions for improvement, the Committee recommends:

34. That the cost-effectiveness of alternative delivery systems for Adult Basic Education be investigated.

35. That curriculum materials be developed in such a way that a variety of media and delivery systems can be used for different students in different locations.

36. That reliable and valid techniques be developed for the evaluation of Adult Basic Education students and programs.

37. That the Ministry of Education collaborate with Canada Manpower to provide greater flexibility with respect to the length of Adult Basic Education programs in which Manpower participates.

A considerable number of B.T.S.D. programs in British Columbia, for example, last for only five months. For many students this is insufficient time allocated for the attainment of the desired upgrading objectives. More opportunities should also be provided for part-time students. The nature and length of a program are key variables in any delivery system and should be tailored to the needs of the students and the desired learning outcomes.

Staff

Instructors in Adult Basic Education, especially in the interior of the province, have occasionally been described as "nomads". Their working conditions generally involve short-term contracts with no guarantees of continuation and few of the benefits afforded to other college instructors. In some cases, but by no means all, the instructors will have completed teacher training and have some teaching experience. It is the rare individual who has had any specificalized training in Adult Basic Education, and in-service training opportunities are few. With respect to instructional staff, the Committee recommends:

38. That Adult Basic Education be offered as an area of concentration in teacher education programs, and that universities also provide diploma or graduate level programs in Adult Basic Education.

39. That, where instructors must be hired on short-term or temporary contracts, they be given sufficient lead-time to become oriented to the institution and the Adult Basic Education curriculum.

40. That, immediately upon hiring new Adult Basic Education instructors, institutions provide them with a thorough orientation to the institution, with special attention to the several Adult Basic Education programs and the support services available.

41. That more time be provided to Adult Basic Education instructors for curriculum development and revision of materials to meet local needs.

Almost every respondent who was contacted in the field pointed to a need for in-service training in Adult Basic Education. Based upon a consideration of potential needs for in-service training identified in the field, the Committee recommends:

42. That in-service training programs, preferably on a regional or distance education basis, be developed and implemented on such topics as:

    assessment of learning disabilities
    evaluation of learning
    life skills
    remedial reading
    consumer awareness
    program development
    training of volunteers and assistants
    remedial mathematics
    use of VAST and other materials.

Within every community there is a considerable number of people with knowledge and skills that could be tapped and used in Adult Basic Education programs, if they were given training and appropriate supervision. Many of these people need only to be asked and they would gladly participate as tutors or instructional assistants on a part-time, voluntary basis as is already happening in a few cases. The Committee therefore recommends:

43. That institutions offering Adult Basic Education programs consider the development of procedures for identifying, training, and using volunteers, and that the use of volunteers be carefully monitored and evaluated.

The experience gained in using volunteers under a number of special projects currently underway should be invaluable in assessing the potential role for volunteers in Adult Basic Education.

Because of its marginal status in many institutions, Adult Basic Education may lack access to the kinds of support services that facilitate a successful program. The kinds of support services provided must be tailored to the needs of the students who participate in Adult Basic Education. Aside from the informal advisory role that is normally held by an instructor, the following concerns were expressed on numerous occasions around the province, and the Committee recommends:

44. That techniques for the identification and assessment of adult learning disabilities be developed for classroom use so that those with problems can be referred to appropriate professional services.

45. That the provision of career and personal counselling for Adult Basic Education students be augmented.

46. That the appropriate ministry assist institutions in the provision of child care services for Adult Basic Education students.

This report to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has been published as a Discussion Paper in order to foster informed reaction to its contents. You are urged to comment in detail or simply complete this form, detach and fold as directed, and mail to the Continuing Education Division of the Ministry. Or you may telephone Dr. Ron Faris, Executive Director of Continuing Education, at (604) 387-1411.

COMMENTS: _____

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ATTENTION: Dr. Ron Faris,
Executive Director

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